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Mrs Philomena Steele
Headteacher
St Edmund Campion Catholic School
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Erdington
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Dear Mrs Steele

Ofsted monitoring inspection

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with my colleagues Rob Hubbleday HMI and Davinder Dosanjh HMI on 30 and 31 March 2011, and for the information which you provided during our visit. Please also thank the students and the Chair of the Governing Body.

The inspection was carried out at no notice to the school by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Inspectors looked at the quality of education and the leadership and management of the school and the contribution made to the well-being of students.

Inspectors visited 45 parts of lessons. They held meetings with staff, students and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work, interrogated the school's assessment, attendance and exclusion records, and looked at the minutes of the meetings of the governing body, the minutes of meetings with the School Improvement Partner, action plans, policy documents and a range of whole-school and departmental evaluations.

Attainment is low in the school but improving. The students have already gained results in GCSE English and mathematics which are an improvement on results at the same time last year. The school's records indicate that results are expected to be close to average this year, with significant improvements in mathematics, science and the specialist subjects of French, German and Spanish. Students generally make satisfactory progress and observations of lessons often showed that learning was good, especially when students were motivated and enthused by a variety of appropriate activities. However, at times, students were lethargic and did not become engaged in their learning because the lessons were too teacher led and failed to motivate the students. Teachers often had to work very hard to get responses from students who were reluctant to respond and answer questions.

Students' behaviour is satisfactory. The school is calm and students are welcoming and friendly. They understand what is expected of them and respond to sanctions. Relationships between adults and students are positive. The number of exclusions has reduced from previous years although it is still high. The majority of exclusions come from students in Years 10 and 11, with a high proportion from Black Caribbean or mixed race heritage and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Key stage coordinators review weekly data on behaviour and, as a result, undertake a number of actions, from contacting parents to putting students on report. The daily patrol rota uses the data to monitor classrooms where concerns have been highlighted. Older students say behaviour has improved.

Students say that they feel safe and are cared for well. In particular, they comment positively on the secure environment and the fact that they know who to go to for support. A large number of staff are present around the school during break and lunch time, which students say they welcome and is the norm. Attendance is low. Levels of persistent absence rose in 2010 and have remained above the national average for the last three years. The current Year 11 students have the lowest level of attendance. The school recognises this as a key priority. The attendance action plan is fairly new and there has not been sufficient time for actions to become embedded. There remain some issues about the accuracy of recording attendance.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and there is an increasing proportion of lessons with good features. These include teachers using information and communication technology well, through for example, the use of video clips to motivate students. Clear learning objectives are supported by appropriate success criteria. Well paced tasks foster strong engagement. There are mutually respectful relationships between staff and students, and successful collaborative work between students. However, when learning is less successful, students are not motivated and often have to listen to teachers' expositions for too long before getting down to work.

Staff know the students well and the school provides effective care for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Students are well supported by the inclusion unit and learning mentors. Those with medical problems, attendance issues and personal problems are sensitively reintegrated into lessons. Procedures for pastoral care are very clear. The school complies with current requirements for safeguarding, including the single central record and all staff are trained in child protection procedures.

Links with external agencies support the welfare of students and the school regularly attends multi-agency meetings to ensure students' well-being. Recent events have tested safeguarding procedures and they have been shown to be robust.

Senior leaders have remained focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning, raising standards and improving attendance rates. The leadership of teaching and learning has been successful in bringing about improvements to the

quality of lessons. There is a very clear and comprehensive system to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision and to follow this up with a range of support to help staff improve. Subject leaders have an accurate overview of the strengths within their areas and are held to account through clear procedures by their line managers. Performance management procedures are now established. Staff who are new to the school say they have been well supported. Governance has been strengthened, in collaboration with the Diocese, by the appointment of a new Chair of the Governing Body who has quickly gained a good overview of the school and is ensuring the governing body focuses on appropriate priorities.

The school has started the consultation process for restructuring the staffing complement. The current budget deficit is projected to reduce year on year until around 2015. As yet, plans for managing the deficit are not finalised or agreed with the local authority.

While the school is still vulnerable because of low attendance and attainment, it has clear plans to improve these areas and has shown that it has already had some success. It has thus demonstrated the capacity to improve.

This letter will be copied to the Secretary of State for Education, the Transitional Strategic Director Children, Young People and Families, Birmingham, and the Director of Schools for the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector